Ethical living. Relinking ethics and consumption through care in Chile and Brazil

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Abstract.

Mainstream conceptualizations of 'ethical consumption' equate the notion with conscious, individual, market-mediated choices motivated by ethical or political aims that transcend ordinary concerns. Drawing on recent sociology and anthropology of consumption literature on the links between ordinary ethics and ethical consumption, this article discusses some of the limitations of this conceptualization. Using data from 32 focus groups conducted in Chile and Brazil, we propose a conceptualization of ethical consumption that does not centre on individual, market-mediated choices but understands it at the level of practical outcomes, which we refer as different forms of 'ethical living'. To do that, we argue, we need to depart from the deontological understanding of ethics that underpins mainstream approaches to ethical consumption and adopt a more consequentialist view focusing on ethical outcomes. We develop these points through describing one particular ordinary moral regime that seemed to be predominant in participants' account of ethics and consumption in both Chile and Brazil: one that links consumption and ethics through care. We show that the moral regime of care leads to 'ethical outcomes', such as energy saving or limiting overconsumption, yet contrary to the mainstream view of ethical consumption emphasizing politicized choice expressed through market, these result from following ordinary ethics, often through routines of practices.

Keywords: ethical consumption, everyday life practices, choice, ethical living, care, sustainability.

1. Introduction

In 2013 we conducted research on how people understand 'ethical consumption' in Chile and in Brazil.[1] The fieldwork, which involved 32 focus groups in the two countries, did not go as smoothly as we expected. Although people's accounts of their everyday practices strongly linked ethics and consumption, participants had difficulties talking about 'ethical consumption' in the sense of its common definition in the ethical consumption literature: consumption exercised as a conscious (even political) choice concerned 'with the effects that a purchasing choice has, not only on themselves, but also on the external world around them' (Harrison et al., 2005b: 2). In fact, in many cases, the concept of ethical consumption had to be further explained to participants to get more relevant answers. Yet even the answers elicited in such a way were often circumscribed views about global politics and were related to specific groups that have travelled or lived abroad (AUTHOR et al Forthcoming).[2]

Importantly, however, as we have discussed elsewhere (AUTHOR et al Forthcoming), the relative absence of 'ethical consumption' discourse in Chile and Brazil does not manifest itself in less 'ethical' outcomes. Quite the contrary. It is widely noted that – while changing fast – Southern countries' consumption practices result overall in a more ethical way of living than that of northern countries (AUTHOR et al, Forthcoming). In other words, in terms of actual 'ethical' *outcomes* these two countries perform better than those where 'ethical consumption', understood as consumption motivated by certain ethical or political *intentions*, is more widespread.

Taking this paradox as its starting point, this paper discusses the limitations of the traditional definitions of 'ethical consumption' (Freestone and McGoldrick 2008;

Harrison, Newholm and Shaw 2005; Lewis and Potter 2011; Micheletti 2003) both at the theoretical and empirical level. In theoretical terms, we propose a particular mode of linking ethics and consumption, which draws on different philosophical traditions from those underpinning standard notions of 'ethical consumption'. These notions are based firstly, on the long-standing sociological and philosophical tradition that links moral agency to conscious intention (cf. Laidlaw 2002). In contrast, the approach proposed here follows recent accounts of sociology of consumption which understands consumption not as the outcome of individual motivations but as part of to the accomplishment of organized practices in everyday life (Warde 2005, Shove 2003), and acknowledges unreflected, habitual ways of behaving ethically. Secondly, and related to this first point, whereas standard accounts draw on deontological moral theory in that they focus on the principles of action, we take an external and more consequentialist approach to ethics, focusing on the impacts of consumption practices (Baron et al, 1997). This approach allows for exploring how ethical consumer aims might often be the inadvertent outcomes of ordinary consumption practices that are anchored in the moral regimes of everyday life.[3]

Against this backdrop, at the theoretical level we problematize two aspects of ethical consumption as commonly understood by ethical consumption scholars. The first aspect, increasingly questioned by sociologists and anthropologies of consumption (Adams and Raisborough 2010; Miller 2001b), is that ethical consumption is customarily defined in opposition to ordinary consumption practices. The second aspect, as we will argue, is that ethical consumption definitions often present an under-theorized relation between agency, choice and consumption presupposing a (neo) liberal anthropology that equates politics with individual choices in markets. Based on these critiques, we propose taking a broader approach to ethical consumption that

encompasses the plurality of moral regimes informing ordinary consumption. Specifically, we suggest a conceptualization that does not centre on individual choices in markets but understands ethical consumption at the level of practical outcomes or consequences, which we will refer to as orchestrating different types of *ethical living*. By emphasizing ethical living, rather than ethical choices, we seek to highlight that the outcomes praised by ethical consumption movements, such as reduction in water and energy consumption, are often largely a result of ordinary moral concerns, such as thrift or care rather than 'ethical consumption concerns' expressed through choice in markets. As we argue, this approach might better fit the place of ethics and consumption in people's ordinary experience and describe better the ethical ways of living deployed outside of the space of market choices.

We illustrate these theoretical arguments by the narratives on ethics and consumption deployed in 32 focus groups conducted in Chile and Brazil in an international investigation of ethical consumption. More concretely, as an example, we describe one particular ordinary moral regime that seems to be predominant in people's accounts of ethics and consumption in both countries: that which links consumption and ethics through care. While leading to ethical outcomes (such as energy saving or limits of overconsumption), these consumption ethics seldom rely on the mainstream view of ethical consumption as related to a politicized choice expressed through markets.

After doing that, we describe how existing regimes of care guiding consumption are strained by new consumption practices related to the process of marketizations in both countries, in particular to the expansion of retail consumption and retail finance. Against this backdrop, we argue that in the Chilean and Brazilian case, 'ethical consumption' as a discourse might be inadvertently contributing to the deterioration of ethical livings as these discourses are intrinsically attached to a process of

marketization.

2. How ordinary ethics got excluded from 'ethical consumption'

Scholarly interest in ethical consumption is on the rise. From different disciplines such as geography (Barnett et al. 2011), political science (Micheletti 2003), sociology (AUTHOR 2014) and business (Holt 2012), scholars are increasingly interested in exploring the social, political and cultural consequences of ethical consumption as well as their causes. This interest has been aligned with the increasing visibility and impact of ethical consumption movements. Reports such as the Ethical Consumer Reports show that the demand for these types of products has been increasing steadily (Bank 2009; Consumer 2013). Correspondingly, an impressive amount of scholarly work focused on explaining the motives, values and factors that influence ethical consumption and consumers (Freestone and McGoldrick 2008; Newholm and Shaw 2007; Shaw and Shiu 2002).

Most scholarly work on 'ethical consumption' puts the emphasis on private, market-based choices. This emphasis reflects the contexts of neoliberalization and globalization debates in which ethical consumption gained relevance as an academic focus of inquiry. In this framework, the consumer exercising political choices through the market appealed to neoliberal policy-makers arguing for the withdrawal of the state. At the same time, the politically motivated consumer provided social and political scientists with hope for a new, even more democratic form of political action in which people could engage, in an era where the nation state, trade unions and other traditional forms of representation lost their power (Miller 1994; Trentmann 2006). The reason why 'ethical consumption' got defined as political, conscious, and market-based is

because the key theoretical question that organized its use was whether or not people will be able to exercise political power *as consumers* in a neoliberal, global world. This is why, at a more philosophical level, these types of approaches tend to understand ethics in a more deontological sense by focusing on the motives and principles through which consumption is organized.

These definitions of ethical consumption focused on individual market choices have been subject to various forms of critiques (cf. Shove 2010, Szász 2007, AUTHOR 2013, AUTHOR FORTHCOMING, McEwan, 2015; for an overview see AUTHOR, 2014; Shove, 2010). Here we focus on those that are particularly relevant for understanding why, in certain contexts, 'ethical consumption' does not necessarily relate to ethical living. This focus is different from the literature suggesting that people do not act on their avowed ethical consumer stances (called the behaviour-attitude gap; Devinney, Auger and Eckhardt 2010) and that even when they do, it does not lead to more ethical outcomes (called the behaviour-impact gap; Csutora 2012). Whereas these studies assume that 'ethical consumption' could lead to more ethical lifestyles if it was put into practice more consistently, our argument is that the very definition of 'ethical consumption' carries bias that make it unsuitable to address ethical living as related to everyday consumption.

The first problem with the understanding of 'ethical consumption' used in the scholarly literature is that it often defines 'ethical consumption' in opposition to ordinary consumption moralities, which are assumed to be either immoral (motivated by hedonism, materialism, etc.), or amoral. Harrison, for instance, defines ethical consumption as consumption motivated by 'political, religious, spiritual, environmental, social or other' ethical aims (Harrison et al., 2005, p. 2), as against the amorality of ordinary choices. In a similar vein, Barnett (2205, p.29), mobilizing geography's

notions of space and distance, uses the term for consumption 'explicitly registering commitment or obligation towards distant or absent others', as opposed to the ordinary focus on close others.

This assumption of ordinary consumption being amoral is put into question by the now massive body of literature documenting the moral concerns guiding ordinary consumption (Adams and Raisborough 2008; Miller 1999; AUTHOR 2014). The standard ethical consumption literature, however, is unable to take account of this ordinary moral complexity due to its pre-existent framework informing research and action on ethical consumption. This framework tends to obscure the the logics through which consumption and ethics are empirically linked in everyday life, ignoring the multiple ways in which ethics are manifested through consumption practices and narratives (AUTHOR 2014). Viewed from this angle, for example, practices such as 'thrift' are seen as dependent on individual personal interest, hence excluded from the realm of 'ethical' action. Contrary to this view, work in anthropology and sociology of consumption shows the multiple moral imperatives informing thrift. As studies looking at this tension between 'ethical consumption' and the ethics embedded in ordinary concerns show (cf. Miller 2001a), the key obstacle to the wider adoption of 'ethical consumption' is precisely the fact that ordinary choices are not amoral. 'Ethical consumption' therefore does not fill a void of ethical commitment, but has to compete with moral concerns that are central to people's life: to be a good mother, a respected member of society and so on.

A second problem with the mainstream definition of 'ethical consumption' n is that it presents an under-theorized relation between agency, choice and consumption. In fact, in most of these accounts, ethical consumption relies on the idea of individual 'choice' where the ethics of consumption is understood in terms of abstract intentions

and (individual) choices in markets. This idea is informed by a distinctively modern and Western worldview, and conceptions of ethical and political subjects and political action.

These have been subject to critiques along three related lines. Firstly, it implies a (neo) liberal anthropology where individual choices, taken in the light of rational analysis of information, are brought to the centre of the analysis in both empirical and normative terms (Barnett et al., 2005; Sassatelli, 2006). Secondly, it presupposes market distribution predicated on the consumer, which is deeply problematic even in Western contexts. As Shove suggests, much of our consumption is dependent on infrastructures of provisions (such as centrally regulated air conditioning systems or road networks) that are beyond individual consumer choices (Shove 2003; Van Vliet, Shove and Chappells 2012). Finally, this definition assumes that the category of the 'consumer' is a universally valid form of self-identification and that consumer choice is thus an unproblematic means of political action. However, the category of the 'consumer' emerged through particular constellations of political, institutional and social trajectories and governance technologies characteristic of mostly Western countries (Barnett et al 2005, Burgess, 2001; Micheletti, 2003; Trentmann, 2005).

If we approach ethical consumption from a different angle, one which focuses on the ethical outcomes of consumption instead of the principles that inform choices, the shortcomings of the mainstream definition become evident. Many forms of ordinary consumption practices leading to ethical outcomes fall outside the scope of the mainstream definition, simply because they are expressions of pre-existent, conscious ethical intentions, acted on through market-based choices. However, as research into actual ethical outcomes (rather than into 'ethical consumption') suggests, many of the most successful instances of ethical ways of living may fall into these categories (Chen

2009; Hargreaves 2011; Kennedy 2011; Miller 2001a). This is captured by the notion of 'equifinality' used in natural science and in consumer behaviour (cf. Kopetz et al. 2002), which indicates that different causes can lead to the same outcome. In this case, the same ethical outcome may result from actions motivated by moral and even immoral, intentional and habitual actions.

In order to grasp all these other ways of linking ethics and consumption that go beyond a notion of individual choice, we need to broaden our understanding of ethical consumption. In the next section, we argue for this broader conception of ethical consumption by reviewing some of the existing work that can be usefully incorporated into such an agenda.

2.1 Towards a broader understanding of ethical consumption

How to grasp ethical consumption, then, without relying on the figure of an ethical subject making political choices in markets? First, we need to start by problematizing the link that connects ethics and consumption exclusively through political choices, broadly defined (Adams and Raisborough 2010; Holt 2012; Miller 2001b; AUTHOR 2014). Albeit consumption is a key normative and political arena, in order to fully grasp the normative and ethical possibilities of consumption in practice, we need to move beyond traditional accounts of ethics and consumption that rely on the figure of the ethical consumer, implying individual choices explicitly framed in relation to ethical consumption concerns or principles. Instead, we need to focus on the moral regimes informing consumption practices in everyday life and their actual consequences and on the practical arrangements through which ethical lives are reproduced.

More generally, this means taking a view in which ethical outcomes (related to

general principles such as the global environmental with global warming) can be (unintended) results of ordinary consumption practices, intertwined with moral concerns situated in everyday life. Indeed, there has been a long and renewed sociological and anthropological interest in understanding the moralities that guide consumption practices in everyday life (Adams and Raisborough 2010; Hall 2011; Mackay 1997; AUTHOR 2014). The starting point of this literature, that this article draws on, has been the acknowledgment that every type of consumption involves the mobilization of moral regimes (Miller 2001). Consumption appears here as a key space through which ethical values are enacted and where people engage in moral obligations and make their moral worlds.

We can distinguish two main strands of research supporting this view. The first focuses on the plurality of moral regimes informing ordinary consumption. This is partly related to the recent pragmatic turn in sociology and its focus on the coexistence of multiple grammars of worth (Boltanski and Thévenot 2006). Building on this, authors have explored for example how competing ethical concerns in consumption are articulated in terms of competing demands and moral conventions, such as the civic and the familiar conventions (Evans 2011). Similar arguments have been proposed by consumption sociologists and anthropologists, who focused on the links between ethics and consumption as mediated through multiple moral cosmologies (Miller 1999). These moral cosmologies, which are available and appropriated by people in their everyday consumption, might vary among different groups, practices and historical context and even be tensioned in specific contexts (AUTHOR 2014). In her work on everyday consumption norms in Hungary, AUTHOR (2014) also shows how consumption practices among different generations mediate different moral cosmologies, incorporating different pragmatic beliefs and ethical visions.

The second, related strand, focused on social practices as a theoretical tool for understanding everyday consumption. Here consumption is not defined as a practice in itself but a moment of all practices (Warde 2005). A key concern of this literature has been exploring the shortcomings of existing accounts that tend to focus on the sovereignty of the consumer, focusing instead on how consumption and its moral regimes relate to complex routines and habitual practices (Warde and Southerton 2012). By taking this standpoint, authors have focused on how the performance of practices relates to different domains and logics through which consumption is being configured (Shove 2003; Warde 2005). In this literature, values and norms are not situated at the level of individual choices but as the outcome of an arrangement of practices as well as their relation with sociotechnical systems of provision. Empirical research at this level has explored, among other elements, how everyday consumption patterns change and are governed by different principles, such as, for example, notions of comfort and cleanness (Shove 2003) and described set of practices that articulate specific types of ethical consumption such as Fairtrade (Wheeler 2012).

This literature suggests that we need to break the presumption that ethical consumption necessarily involve a degree of ethical individual consciousness and motivations. Instead, general ethical outcomes, such as environmentally friendly consumption, can result from the ordinary organization of consumption in everyday life and the plurality of moral regimes that shape such practices.

This article takes this path, which allows for opening the discussion into other ways of framing the links between ethics and consumption. More concretely, we propose taking a consequentialist philosophical approach to ethics that prioritizes the ethical consequences following from practices instead of a deontological approach that implicitly underpins mainstream definitions, which understand ethics through the

application of general principles and thus focuses on intend (Baron et al, 1997).

At a more sociological level, taking this path implies a twofold action. Firstly, we need to start by focusing on how everyday practices involve the interplay of different moral regimes through which ethical outcomes can be mapped. This, thus, requires an important methodological shift: instead of starting by defining what 'counts' as ethical consumption and what does not count as such, we need instead to focus on grasping and describing the existence of a plurality of moral regimes linking ethics and consumption in everyday life. Secondly, and based on the previous action, we need to explore how different ordinary moral regimes might have greater impacts on more general political and ethical concerns regarding social and environmental challenges. Only if we map and describe *ethical* concerns in everyday life, in lowercase, can we then move to reflecting on the *Ethics* of consumption (uppercase).[4] Doing this involves shifting the attention from individual choices aimed at Ethical outcomes to the causes that, often inadvertently, lead of these outcomes; and among these, to the ethics of ordinary practices, which are our focus here. In practical terms, this requires mapping the different arrangement of practices in order to understand which are better aligned with wider political and environmental concerns instead of starting with the ethical intentions of actors.

To mark this shift, we propose describing those everyday practices that lead to ethical outcomes as forms of 'ethical living'. Taking this non-individualistic approach to ethical consumption implies an acknowledgement that 'ethical living', and the ordinary practices and moral regimes that it relies on, are intertwined with sociotechnical systems of provisions through which they become more (or less) plausible (Van Vliet, Shove and Chappells 2012). Taking this view, we argue, might enrich current approaches to ethical consumption by bringing into the picture

consumption practices and narratives that often do not fit into mainstream research on ethical consumption, which, as argued, often equate ethical consumption with individual choices in markets.

In the next section, we illustrate this theoretical discussion by describing how a group of Chilean and Brazilian participants in 32 focus groups linked consumption and ethics. We will do so in three parts. First, we briefly discuss the methods, the cases – Chile and Brazil- as well as the methodological impasse we found when asking people about ethical consumption (in terms of the individual choice of ethical goods and or practices) in both countries. Second, we describe a predominant account that links ethics and consumption in people's narratives of their everyday life consumption practices. We define this narrative as the everyday moral regimes of 'care', defined mainly through relations of dedication to others and the concern with maintaining existing relations of care in everyday life. We describe how this moral regimes of care might involve ethical outcomes, while it does not fit into traditional accounts of ethical consumption as related to choices.

Thirdly, we describe how in people's accounts this moral regime of care is increasingly being tensioned by the sociotechnical arrangements that orchestrate ordinary consumption through markets. In particular, we describe how the expansion of retail consumption and finance is challenging traditional ways of consuming informed by the regime of care.

3. Ethics of consumption regimes in Chile and Brazil

The material we will discuss in the next pages is from a series of focus groups (32 in total, 16 in Chile and 16 in Brazil),[5] which were carried out in the framework of the

research project ‘PROJECT’. This project aimed to create an overview of ethical consumption in Chile and Brazil and to draw up some guidelines on how the Brazilian and Chilean states incorporate – or could eventually incorporate – ethical criteria in public procurement.

Chile and Brazil are particularly interesting cases for the purposes of our argument. An accelerated economic development during the last decades originated an important growth in the average income during the last years. The retail sector and the credit market have grown rapidly in both countries, bringing an increase of retail consumption that coexist with more traditional modes of consumption. In both countries these change led to important debates regarding the increasing role of consumption in articulating lower middle class identities and as a practice debasing traditional ways of framing collective and individual identities (AUTHOR 2016, Ferreira et al., 2012). However, despite their similitudes in terms of their trajectories, these countries also present important differences. While Chile is a relatively small market at a global scale with a population of 17 million people, Brazil is one of the most important emergent economies with 197 million inhabitants. Brazil presents a much higher level of fiscal expenditure than Chile (39% vs 23% of the GDP, the highest in the Latin American region – IEF, 2013), evidencing a higher degree of state intervention. Ethical consumption also has a different history in the two countries. In Brazil, ethical consumption has been mostly promoted by the state and NGOs, while in Chile ethical consumption begun in relation to market drivers and only gradually has been incorporated by the state and civil society. (AUTHOR, 2013).

3.1. Researching ethical consumption discourses

The following analysis focuses on describing some shared moral regimes that were central in the 32 focus groups carried out in the two countries. When we first started our research we assumed, perhaps rather naively, that we would be able to quite easily obtain people's statements of what they meant by ethical consumption. In the focus group protocol, we included questions such as: 'What do you understand by ethical consumption?', 'Have you heard about environmental certifications?', or 'Have you ever participated in a boycott?'. The focus groups began by asking about general consumption practices, which participants readily engaged in; however, when dealing with the questions on 'ethical consumption' that were introduced later in the discussion, most interviewees admitted to not understanding the meaning of those terms, and often asked us for further explanation to produce a clear response.

While the participants in the focus groups rarely established a spontaneous conceptualization of ethical consumption similar to the definitions used by literature on ethical consumption (as buying something because of its ethical attributes), they were able to establish relationships between their daily practices and what they considered an act of ethical/responsible consumption. Within these, there were some ideas that appeared regularly in both countries, even though they were expressed in diverse ways and were aimed at varied subjects/objects. For the vast majority, the focus groups participants' ethics and consumption were contextually deeply related to the ordinary practices of caring for oneself and loved ones as well as to the household reproduction.

Two specific elements appear as defining this moral regimes of care linking consumption and ethics: first, the idea of taking care of things and resources, and second, the idea of using consumption for taking care of other people.[6] These elements were intertwined in the descriptions of very concrete and ordinary practices and problems. They were also very visible in both countries and in different types of

respondents.

3.1 Consuming as taking care of resources and people

When it comes to describing the ordinary ethics guiding consumption, a key concern was the idea of 'consuming strictly what is needed'. This guideline was described as convenient (and necessary) for preserving the family budget. This concern was also present through the moral imperative of keeping consumption under control. In relation to these ideas, people often described how they struggled with the fine line between actual needs and excesses in different areas of their life. For most people interviewed, however, the definition of 'necessity' varies. While some declare that they only buy to replace broken things, others saw being well dressed at work as a necessity, which justified buying expensive pieces of clothing. In this sense, the conversation took the form of a general agreement where all the respondents presented a specific case.

Moderator: *You?*

I*: First the need, then the price...*

Moderator*: The need for what? You mean you are in need of that thing?*

I*: It is my case ... sometimes I use the same thing a lot ... until it gets torn... can't use it anymore. ... then I buy a new one! I keep using the same blouse ... it gets torn and useless, then I think that I need to buy some new clothes.* '

Young-adult, Lower Income, urban Brazil

The control of consumption, as a moral value, was described also in close relation to the value of sobriety; consuming in a fair measure was not only a necessity, it was the right thing to do under all circumstances.

These concerns about keeping consumption under control were intertwined with very practical issues regarding how to buy properly and how to deal with the practical aspects of using resources at home. The value of controlling consumption was embodied, for example, in the practical skill of being a smart buyer, in particular in terms of the ability to find the right price and quality. Accounts of consumption were full of stories of how to find the right price or product, often defying difficult conditions. As it can be observed in the following conversation, all participants agreed on the need for planning before shopping for groceries. However, the strategies that each of them describe were different;

***I1**: I try to buy in the nearest supermarket once a week. I plan the purchase and get vegetables that will last me the whole week …*

***Moderator:** Anyone else plans the purchase?*

***I2:** Yes, every Mondays I go to a supermarket close to my house because there is a 5% discount that day. The supermarket is empty on Mondays...*

***I3**: Yes, I try to go as little as possible*

***I4**: I don't like to go either*

***I5:** I have lunch every day at the office and I used to buy prepared food, anything I could find, but I realized it was much more convenient to go to the supermarket and to bring my own cooked food…*

Young Adult, upper middle income, Urban Chile

There is a constant concern for keeping all expenses under control and being informed about prices and deals. Among the many everyday tricks described by interviewees

were the deployment of purchase tactics such as buying only on discount days; going to wholesale supermarkets or visiting the supermarket daily in order to buy only when things are on sale; organizing collective purchases with family and friend to stock up on groceries to get a wholesale price; or comparing prices before purchasing or planning the purchase.

I*: My mom is the one who shops at the supermarket.*

Moderator**:** Does she consider different things when shopping?

I: *Yes, she focuses a little more on the price, seeks the sale, seeks the "take 3 pay for 2", or that sort of thing… but she is also used to some brands, she knows that she can choose between two or three brands, she cannot go beyond that even if there is a sale, but she always looks for the sale.*

Young Adult, upper middle income, Urban Chile.

This idea of keeping consumption under control was also present in the concern of taking care of existing resources in the home, and thus informed ordinary practices that involve the uses of energy and water. There were many accounts of saving energy and water as common family practices rather than as something regarded as being an 'ethical consumer'. Practices such as turning off the lights, saving water or repairing and recycling things were often considered as key parts of the idea of keeping consumption under control and to economize:

I1*: Just to give you an example, because now there are water-saving ponds… my mom puts a water-filled bottle to save water from the bath pond.*

I2*: We save electricity for example. It is also a way of... at home we usually have just one or two lights on, and all the bulbs we have are energy saving light bulbs.*

Young, Lower Income, urban Chile.

In most cases, these practices were described not in terms of explicit choices but as related to habits and traditional ways of doings things at home that have been around for generations, such as switching the light off or taking care with water use.

I1*: At least to me it was taught as a habit. Also, when I am brushing my teeth I turn off the water, I only consume what is fair and necessary.'*
I2*: My parents taught me to always switch off the light when leaving the room, it is a family tradition**.'***

Young, Lower Income, urban Chile.

These practices often intertwined a history of habitual repetition with economic considerations that have been part of the of people´s history. This was clearly expressed by a Brazilian respondent when asking about the origins of her thriftiness.

I: *These values have been accumulating during my whole life, a more austere education when it comes to consumption. Life was not easy, and things were calculated (scarce). Waste was always condemned, any type of waste.*

Adult, middle income, urban Brazil

Like in the narratives that described how to buy properly as a very practical issue that involved dealing with practical concerns, taking care of resources was also deeply related to efforts to hack existing infrastructures of provision. One illustrative example comes from an explanation that an interviewee gave on how she saved water by hacking the normal washing cycle of her washing machine at home. She explained that she saved water and energy by 'breaking' the different cycles of the washing machine.

***I**: For example, now that my washing machine is broken, I had... the only water wasted was the first cycle, then with the rinsing water I watered my garden, with jars, I even watered around the neighbourhood, because it makes me sad to throw water away.*
One washes only white clothes, in automatic mode, I take it out, I compress it and I pour it in a container and then, with the same water, I wash colour clothes… I save energy, water, detergent and I contaminate less.

Adult, lower income, Urban Chile.

The practical moral principle of keeping consumption under control is strictly related to another common narrative that links consumption and ethics: consumption as a tool for taking care of others, in particular of members of one's family. Consumption appears here as a tool for reproducing and enhancing the relation with loved ones, thus a technology of love (Miller 1999). A particular way in which this technology of care was expressed is through the emphasis on being thrifty for oneself and saving money for others.

***I**: I am thriftier when I shop for myself. When it is for my children I pay more attention to quality rather than to the price, but for me, I won't be spending a lot of money on clothes… it is different when I buy for my children than when I buy for myself. With my children I see the quality of the garment, I make sure it is good, that it is cotton, that it will last for more than one use... also I care a lot about the food I buy for my family.'*

Young Adult, Upper middle income, Urban Chile.

To provide the best for the family was also related to health concerns, particularly among women who saw food purchasing as an important part of their role. Women in lower income groups revealed a tension associated with bad nutritional habits and over-eating. In this case, it was caring for others that, inadvertently, resulted in ethical living practices of limiting food consumption and eating organic and environmentally friendly

food products (for a similar phenomenon see Andersen 2011; Johnston, Szabo and Rodney 2011; Magnusson et al. 2001).

These cases highlight three important points. First, the practices described above by respondents in Chile and Brazil all involve ethical outcomes and lead to ethical lives – a concept that we defined in terms of outcomes pursued by ethical consumption movements – without any of the 'ethical consumer' intentions being present. They rely on a different set of moral regimes, particularly that of an ethics of care, which implies taking care of resources by exercising thrift and economizing and described in terms of relations of care to important others. While this way of linking ethics and consumption, as related to caring practices, is not established by individual, politically motivated choices in consumer markets, it still contributes to an ethical way of living as it is one of its unintended outcomes. The value of thrift, for example, brings together principles of simple living (i.e. living with what is needed) with very practical elements such as taking care of utilities (energy, water) or learning to shop wisely (i.e. not to overconsume).

Second, these moral regimes are not understood in terms of an ethic of individual choices, but rather as a taken for granted, practical logic of reproducing and maintaining relations of caring through everyday activities. Consequently, they are not described in an abstract manner. Most of the accounts described in the previous paragraphs express these moral concerns through a very concrete description of practices and tricks instead of describing general principles of actions. Consumption is thus *ethical* for respondents as long as it is involved in a practice of caring, as 'practical ethics' (AUTHOR 2014, 2015). The rationality through which ethics and consumption are linked here is not a politics of choice but one of a rather different nature that relies on determination, relations and caring practices. We propose, thus, labelling this

predominant moral regime as a 'regime of care', inspired by the concept of 'logic of care' developed by Anne Marie Mol (2008) based on her observations in the field of health. For Mol, care involves having a practical orientation towards the care for others that is contextual and experiential. Care is, thus, embedded in practice more than in discourse. It is about determination from and to others, not about autonomy.

We do not want to suggest that the moral regimes of care is the only narrative that can be identified in the discourse about ethical consumption in Chile and Brazil. As argued elsewhere (AUTHOR et al, Forthcoming) there are also other narratives about ethical consumption circulating among our respondents, for example, those that link consumption with more global and abstract discourses of global justice and environmental concern, prevalent among upper income respondents. These other narratives were, nevertheless, much less frequent and less connected with people's concerns about their own consumption practices.

3.2 Marketization competing with care

We described in the previous section how consumption and ethics were intertwined in respondents' narratives through a practical moral regimes of care. However, the focus groups also revealed that these general principles informing consumption are being challenged and strained by recent transformations, i.e. the expansion of finance and consumer retail. This tension between ordinary consumption ethics and the process of marketization was described both in an abstract and in a more concrete manner.[7] For example, when talking about ethical consumption, some respondents said that 'the system' (referring mainly to big consumer goods companies and the retail industry,

but also, to a lesser extent, to the financial system and even to the government when promoting financial industry and retail interests) was constantly trying to trick them into buying things they do not need and expensive items. The expansion of supermarkets and retail stores made it thus more difficult to be thrifty and to avoid overconsumption. Consuming, in these accounts, requires navigating a very complicated space of sales and tricks designed to 'capture' consumers:

I: This is what happens when you go to the supermarket, you go to get five things and at the end you leave the supermarket with ten, that is the difference, because you suddenly want something, with the wide variety of things that they have… let's say, you are going to buy something specific, you realized this other brand is on sale and… for example, you go to get some pasta and you realize you can get three more tomato sauce packs, and you were planning to spend only $500 in the whole thing and suddenly you end up spending $1500. And you have to check on the sales, because you sometimes find products at the bottom of the shelf for half price. Nowadays, my wife and I, we go directly to what's on sale... I always, always have to bring more money with me because I end up spending way more than I expected.

Adult, lower income, Urban Chile

Against this backdrop, several accounts focused on describing admiration for women from past generations who were still able to lead ethical lives (generally mothers and grandmothers). A critical concern dealt with the ability to be savvy in order to manage material household necessities, particularly to the practical ability to reuse and recycle things. There was a sense that this ethical way of living is disappearing, as this account of a grandmother's resourcefulness illustrated:

I: My grandmother was a healthy woman, I always say so, she lived 104 years, and she was not part of this consumerist world, she lived only with the essentials, she sewed flour bags, she recycled them, made sheets out of them. I think the kids will keep these memories …

Here again, consumption practices that lead to ethical outcomes (in relation to general concerns relating the environment or overconsumption) were not anchored in any type of individual ethical principle or intent. Rather, they were embedded in 'traditional' ways of consuming, which according to the interviewees had been lost, or conflicted with the processes of market expansion. Values and practices such as austerity, maximizing the use of resources, shopping at local markets rather than large retailers, planning family purchases and purchasing durable goods were described as values that were threatened by the new logic of the market that stimulated conspicuous consumption and privileged what is cheap and disposable.

These narratives are indeed supported by existing quantitative data about the transformation of consumer practices. In a recent survey on ethical consumption practices in Chile, for example, we noted that practices that are associated with taking care of resources are declining. What our qualitative data adds to this are some of the mechanisms underlying this trend: the way marketization challenges the very routines of practices through which the existing moral regime of care led to ethical lives.

(Insert Table I here)

4. Discussion: From ethical choice to ethical living

The previous section began by noting how conventional definitions of ethical consumption went against the grain of how people spontaneously discussed ethics and consumption in Chile and Brazil. We then described one of the dominant moral regimes informing people's ordinary ethics of consumption, which, drawing on Mol (2008), we labelled as the moral regime of care. This is not to suggest that this moral regime is the only one shaping consumption in everyday life. Other moral and amoral (such as individual pleasure or convenience), and even immoral intentions are also at play in everyday consumption, and may also lead to outcomes compatible with ethical consumerist aims. Our aim, however, has been not to give a full overview, but to describe how one particular moral regime – the regime of care- is very relevant in terms of organizing everyday consumption.

What makes care particularly important is that, according to our data, it is a key moral narrative that people give about their consumption practices in Chile and Brazil. In most cases, however, care does not appear as an abstract formulation but as a something that is deeply embedded in everyday practices. We illustrated this point by describing two related elements through which moral regimes of care inform consumption through everyday practices: first, through caring for things and resources, which constituted a very important part of our focus group discussions, in particular in the discussion of practical details about how to be thrifty; and second, through caring for others, in particular, for family members. After doing this, we then briefly moved on to describing how, in people's accounts, these moral regimes of care are being threatened by new types of consumer practices and principles, mostly due to the expansion of consumer and financial retail. In doing so, we suggested that in this case, existing links between consumption and ethics are tensioned and transformed via the process of marketization.

Against this backdrop, we want to highlight here some broader elements that relate to the links between ethics and consumption. First, as described in the material, individual accounts based on choice do not seem to fit with how ethics and consumption are being talked about and experienced in everyday life. We have described here how consumption and ethics are linked through a regime of moral obligation and care, of which ethical outcomes might be an unintended consequence rather than an intentional aim motivated by a general principle.

Our findings are compatible with the now relatively standard argument that ordinary consumption mobilizes particular regimes of moral value that might not fit with ethical consumption (cf. Miller 1999, 2001a, b). However, and this is our second point, we want to highlight here a different (but complementary) aspect discussed in this paper. In most of the practices described here, the actual outcome has implications that go far beyond the moral regime that informs the practice itself. For example, consuming just what is needed involves articulating a relation with material resources that minimizes the environmental and social impacts. In this sense, although the practices described here might not fit into a standard framework of ethical consumption (as guided by ethical choices), they certainly inform ethical forms of living. In other words, they are directly related to more collective ethical problems such as those commanded by the ethical consumption movement (for instance, low carbon consumption, minimizing overconsumption, consumption attentive to energy and water resources being used, etc). In general terms, they downsize consumption and save resources, which is consistent with recent political and environmental calls for more frugal forms of consumption (Doherty and Etzioni 2003; Etzioni 1998). Nevertheless, the narratives of consumption described here do not articulate this frugality in terms of a wider coherent ethical principle, as is the case in ethical consumption movements; instead,

these principles are embedded in very specific practices through which consumption is driven in everyday life. In other words, it is less about acting on a general principle than about organizing and struggling with the very practical matters through which consumption is organized, such as 'hacking' the washing mashing or developing practical ways of saving money when purchasing.

As discussed in the theoretical section of this paper, we believe that describing the practical accomplishments that lead to 'ethical lives' might provide a better way to understand the links between ethics and consumption than an approach that focuses mostly on finding out how people develop (ethical) choices in consumption. First, this view matches better with how people actually talk and evaluate consumption in their everyday life. It offers, thus, an account that does not set ethics (as a general principle) against the way in which people move (ethically) in their everyday life. Secondly, in doing it allows us to explore how consumption might involve ethical lives without having to rely on an individual Western-centric (Barnett et al. 2005) figure of the consumer as someone making choices. It thus openes up space to value (in ethical forms) other forms of consumption that do not necessary fit into this scheme. In our view, this is particularly important as allows for describing ethical consumption which occurs outside marketized contexts and the way these different contexts relate to each other.

This move also implies a shift from the (implicit) philosophical underpinning of traditional notions of ethical consumption. These notions rely on pre-defined notion of ethics, specifying the values that people should adopt in their life for their choices to be considered 'ethical'. Our proposition has been to adopt a more consequentialist approach (Pettit 1997), which instead of focusing on the question of whether or not people hold a particular moral principle, focuses on the outcomes of these choices.[8]

Finally, we showed that the moral regimes that lead to ethical lives, in the context of Brazil and Chile are tensioned by the expansion of the retail industry, in particular consumer and financial retail. The broader implication of this point is that when promoting ethical outcomes, instead of thinking about changing people's attitudes about consumption we might also think about how to prevent these practices and existing morals regimes of care from being challenged by the current process of marketization.

NOTES

[1] The 'NAME OF THE PROJECT' project brought together an interdisciplinary academic team based in the UK (UNIVERSITY), Chile (UNIVERSITY) and Brazil (UNIVERSITY) in collaboration with three campaign NGOs (NGO`S NAME) to explore how the buying power of the individual and the state can be used as a lever for development.

[2] A similar finding is reported by Dombos in Hungary, where fair trade is associated with Westernization (2008).

[3] The term 'regimes' draws on Lakoff and Collier's concept of 'regimes of living' (2004, p. 420) which they define as culturally specific, connected sets of practices and ethical reasoning. This allows for accommodating both discourse and practice, and attends to the plurality of moralities informing consumption (see also Author).

[4] Miller makes a similar distinction between ethics as defined by ethical consumer movements and the ethical concerns of ordinary consumption practices. He refers to the former as the 'ethics' of consumption (defined as 'direct involvement of altruistic concern for others and, in particular, distant others') and to the latter as 'morality' (which involve 'general questions of good versus bad, or right versus wrong behaviour by the social actors themselves' (Miller, 2001a, p. 133).

[5] Focus groups in Chile were conducted in the capital city of Santiago and the major cities of La Serena and Concepción. We also included a small rural town in the Metropolitan Region called Alhué. In Brazil, the focus groups took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brasilia, Santa Catarina, Bahia, Sao Paulo, Sergipe and Pernambuco. The fieldwork was conducted between June and July, 2013. For each group, people were selected considering age, gender, socioeconomic level and whether they lived in an urban or rural area.

[6] The regime of care appears as the dominant regime in both countries without major differences. This is not to suggest that it is an ahistorical, universal morality. As Miller (1999) shows in *The Theory of Shopping* in the UK context, the rise of the moral regime of care is driven by historically specific social and cultural (particularly religious) processes. To explore why such similarities exist between Chile and Brazil would require an inquiry into these historical processes in the two countries, which is beyond the scope of the present paper.

[7] There is a longstanding criticism of capitalism with authors equating market society with the lack of morality, and contrasting it with previous and alternative forms of economic organizations (Slater 1997). This is not the position that we are taking here. Instead of associating specific forms of economic organization with morality or immorality based on an a priori, theoretical viewpoint, we treat the relationship between economic arrangements and ethical consumption outcomes as an empirical question. We therefore understand the tension presented here not as universal opposition between a moral realm and the immoral realm of market economy, but as an empirical case of competing moral regimes in everyday life, all of which are embedded in larger socio-technical systems.

[8] For a counter-opinion, suggesting a move in the opposite direction through virtue ethics, see Jamieson (2010).

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